

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Landmark/District:	<b>Greater U Street</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>725 T Street NW</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>17- 305</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Imania Price</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

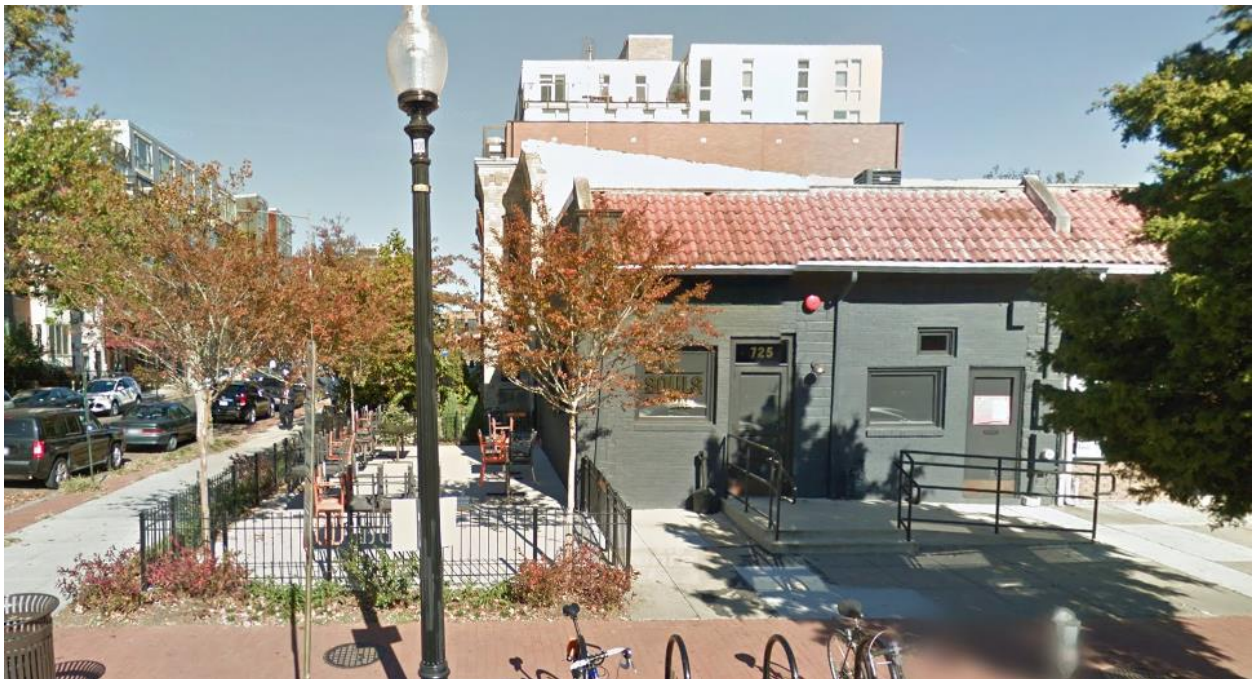
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Owners 725-727 T Street LLC request permit review for construction of a new steel framed canopy over an existing sidewalk café to 725 T Street, NW in the U Street Historic District.

**Property Description**

725 T Street was constructed in 1911 by architect and owner Percival D. Emmert. Mr. Emmert also constructed buildings 723-717 on the same permit. This row of modest one-story brick commercial buildings contributes to the U Street Historic District. At 725, the storefront faces T Street while the property uses the public space area along its 8<sup>th</sup> street side elevation as an unenclosed sidewalk cafe.



**Proposal**

The applicant proposes to construct a steel frame canopy across the length of the side elevation of the property. The canopy will extend approximately 32' in length and 9' in width. The canopy would be supported by two steel columns with three steel support beams; the support structure

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would extend from the edge of the canopy to the sidewalk café fence. The canopy will also support ceiling fans and outdoor heaters.

### **Evaluation**

While a canopy over a sidewalk café may be appropriate, the type of the canopy depends on the specific characteristics of the historic district and building type.<sup>1</sup> In this instance, the size, visual weight, and extent of projection of the canopy structure is disproportionate to the modest building, dominating the public space of this primarily residential sidewalk along 8<sup>th</sup> street. Given the surrounding context is primarily mixed use with residential along 8<sup>th</sup> street and commercial along T St, the proposed canopy will detract from the character of the row by obstructing views of the building elevations and adds excess clutter to an otherwise green public space. Constructing the canopy without a setback from the storefront façade diminishes the character defining features of the storefront and highlights the bulky canopy structure along the building.

The DC public space regulations state that fixtures in a sidewalk café should not be a permanent structure.<sup>2</sup> Those regulations go on to state that “the attachment of a canopy through masonry is prohibited unless justified by the specific characteristic of the building” to which the applicant has not defended as necessary.

While sidewalk cafés are prevalent in the historic district, they typically employ umbrellas, retractable awnings, or fabric canopies on light-weight frames as a way to provide weather and sun protection for sidewalk cafes. The Board’s *Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Buildings* states that “awnings and canopies should be made of treated, weather-durable fabric such as canvas or woven acrylic. Vinyl, metal, and plastic are not appropriate awning or canopy materials.”

The proposed canopy is not compatible with the character of the historic district, nor consistent with the Board’s guidelines or the city’s public space regulations in its size, material, or its relationship to the building to which it is being attached.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find issuance of the permit as inconsistent with the purposes of the preservation act and incompatible with the character of the historic district.*

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 25 “DC Standards For Signs, Awnings, Canopies, and Marquees”

<sup>2</sup> DCMR 24-312.3 The fixtures of a sidewalk cafe shall not be bolted or permanently affixed to public space, except that screw sockets may be permitted as a form of anchoring when approved by the Public Space Committee